

Six Traits Writing Strategies

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**Improving Writing with Six Traits and
Writing Strategies: One Problem at a
Time**

Review of the Six Traits

The Six Traits are the qualities that teachers, writers, and readers think are important in good writing.

Ideas
Organization
Voice

Word Choice
Sentence Fluency
Conventions

Review of the Writing Process

Planning

Drafting



Publishing



Revising



Editing

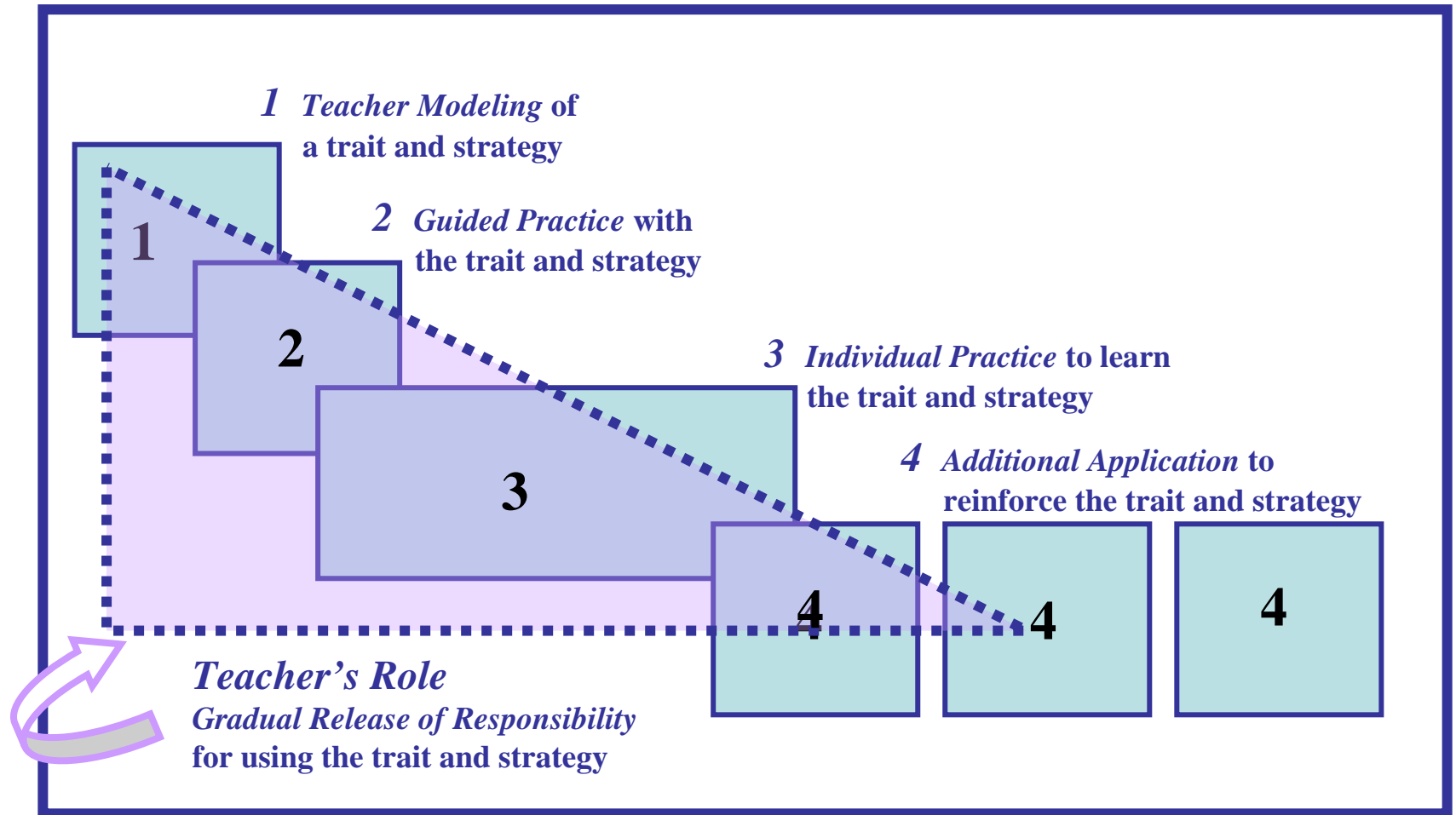


6 Traits and the Writing Process



Teaching Process for Traits and Strategies

Gradual release of responsibility
within a framework of process-based writing instruction:



Using Writing in the Teaching/Learning Process

Within a framework of content learning and process-based writing instruction:



From Anne Lamott, Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life,
New York: Random House, 1994.

Thirty Years ago my older brother, who was ten years old at the time, was trying to get a report on birds written that he'd had three months to write, which was due the next day. We were out at our family cabin in Bolinas, and he was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and unopened books on birds, immobilized by the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother's shoulder, and said, "Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird."

Key Abilities and Strategies

for the Six Traits,

Bird by Bird

Ideas

**Ideas are the content of the message—
what the writing says.**

Key Abilities:

- **State and clarify main points**
- **Provide documented support, elaboration, anecdotes, images, and details**

Ideas

Key Strategies:

- Focus on your subject and make a list of ideas that come to mind
- Take double entry notes to get ideas from reading and make sense of them for yourself
- Show, don't tell
- State main idea clearly
- State purpose and audience
- Expand ideas by adding details
- Group and grow ideas
- Main ideas and supporting details to show development of ideas
- Decide what to include and what to leave out

Organization

Organization is the internal structure of the piece—how the whole piece of writing is shaped.

Key Abilities:

- **Structure the whole piece**
- **Connect ideas logically or chronologically**
- **Beginning Introduction**
- **Middle Body**
- **Ending Conclusion**

Organization

Key Strategies:

- Group ideas you've listed into categories of related items
- Arrange ideas into paragraphs
- Choose and integrate details to show relatedness
- Visualize overall organization pattern
- Chronological Sequencing
- Logical Sequencing
- Interesting lead
- Full-bodied writing
- Conclusion tells what was learned
- Effective transitions

Voice

Voice is the writer's own interest added to the writing—what makes a reader feel, respond, and want more.

Key Abilities:

- **Write with interest and enthusiasm**
- **Match level of formality with purpose and audience**
- **Hold the reader's interest**

Voice

Key Strategies:

- Clarify your purpose
- Visualize your audience
- The feeling factor: Match your voice and others with your purpose and audience
- Try to move the reader by expressing your interest, feeling, and insight in the voices you're using

Word Choice

Word Choice is the skillful selection of words to create meaning.

Abilities:

- **Identify weak words and find stronger ones**
- **Use words in appropriate contexts**

Word Choice

Key Strategies:

- Evaluate use of everyday words in the writing
- Look for limited and dull words
- Select specific and precise words
- Match your word choices to your intended level of formality
- Use powerful words to provide energy

Sentence Fluency

Sentence Fluency is the way words are connected within and between sentences.

Key Abilities:

- **Construct sentences**
- **Combine sentences**
- **Connect sentences**
- **Vary sentence openings**
- **Vary sentence length**

Sentence Fluency

Key Strategies:

- Make sentences grow by adding to them to clarify and illustrate your meaning
- Make each sentence grow out of the one before
- Combine sentences
- Try for sentence rhythm
- Vary sentence structure and length
- Fix sentences that are choppy, incomplete, or rambling

Conventions

Conventions includes punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, capitalization, and paragraph indentation.

Abilities:

- **Identify problems with conventions**
- **Fix problems with conventions**

Conventions

Key Strategies:

- Look for patterns
- Work on one pattern at a time
- Invent a strategy for each persistent problem:
 - Sound-based misspellings
 - Sight-based misspellings
 - Homonym problems (e.g., there, their, they're)
 - Paragraph boundaries
 - Sentence boundaries
 - Fragments and run-ons
 - Comma, apostrophe, quotation marks
 - Pronoun reference
 - Agreement—subject/verb; pronoun/antecedent
 - Verb tense shifts
 - Capital letters
 - Usage problems
 - Contractions
 - Overuse of “and then”